



State of Utah

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DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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April 25, 1994

TO: Minerals File

FROM: Lynn Kunzler, Reclamation Specialist *LK*

RE: Site Inspection, Western Clay Company, Last Chance
Bentonite Clay Mine, M/015/061, Emery County, Utah

Date of Inspection: April 21, 1994

Time of Inspection: 1030 - 1230

Conditions: Clear and Warm

Participants: Wayne Hedberg and Lynn Kunzler, DOGM; Stan
Jackson, Western Clay

Purpose of Inspection: Permitting change from SMO to LMO and
DOGM staff site familiarization.

Western Clay Company has proposed expanding the Last Chance Bentonite Clay Mine from SMO to LMO status. A site inspection was performed to familiarize DOGM staff with onsite conditions and to assist us in completing our review/evaluation of the permit application. The minesite is located @12.4 miles south of the I-70, Fremont Junction exit. A company sign identifies the final turnoff to the minesite. This turnoff is located at the junction of the actual mine access road with the county road. The mine access road is presently @0.2 miles in length. A section of the county road immediately adjacent to the mine access road has been upgraded somewhat by Western Clay.

Division personnel visually estimated the existing surface disturbance at 3.5-4.0 acres. Therefore the company has not yet exceeded the 5-acre limit of disturbance for SMO status. Stan Jackson indicated that mining would resume in the near future and would probably exceed the 5-acre limit in the next few months. Mining is progressing in a northerly direction along the bentonite clay outcrop. Mr. Jackson stated that the mine development plan (blocks #1 & 2) as proposed in the LMO application will last approximately 10-year mine life based upon present demand and production levels. Mr. Jackson discussed the general mining sequence, limits of mining, proposed reclamation and permit boundaries.

Page 2
Memorandum to file
M/015/061
April 25, 1994

Site conditions confirmed this area as one with low precipitation, poor soils (no topsoil over the outcrop) and sparse vegetation (vegetation on the permit area was less than the surrounding vegetation due to the clay outcrop which has essentially no plant life). We visually estimated overall cover at @10%. Dominant plant species observed included shadscale, buffaloberry, galleta grass, and the proposed endangered cactus (Pediocactus winkleri) (the cactus was observed both within and adjacent to the mine site area). The BLM has initiated a program of identifying/flagging and transplanting the sensitive specimens in advance of the mining operation. Land use of the mine site and adjacent areas is mostly undeveloped, with limited grazing and recreation use. This needs to be identified in the NOI-LMO.

Observations of the minesite and adjacent area failed to identify evidence of significant erosional concerns associated with the present mining activities. Mr. Jackson stated from personal experience that local precipitation is readily absorbed by the first few inches of the clay deposit. The resultant swelling of the clay effectively minimizes further absorption and any subsequent precipitation usually runs off without causing significant erosional problems. We witnessed no significant erosional evidence to contradict his observations while onsite. It is our opinion that the implementation of supplemental sediment and erosion control measures may not be necessary at this time. Most of the disturbed area drainage is being contained within the confines of the ongoing mining area. Future need should be based upon continued observation of onsite conditions.

Several photos were taken to document existing conditions at the minesite. At the conclusion of our inspection, we told Mr. Jackson that we hoped to provide Western Clay with a copy of our initial review comments within the next 7-10 days.

jb
cc: Slim Garrick, WCC consultant
Stanley Jackson, WCC
Minerals staff (route)
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